

WALTER JOSEPH; OR, THE NAME REGAINED.



O! *Walter Joseph* must come here—must he! exclaimed Sir Hugh de Brackenburgh, as he pushed back his chair from the large, old-fashioned fireplace, that his old servant, Hannah Pettisworthy, was preparing to sweep clean. “*Walter Joseph!* another *Walter*. It is hard that I should be obliged to take him in, after the manner in which James has behaved to us. However, he must come. Of course he must! But I never thought the old castle would be disgraced by another *Walter* in my time.”

“He need not be a disgrace, Sir Hugh! he need not be like the old *Walter*, though he does bear his name. There were plenty of *Walter de Brackenburghs*, and right good ones too, afore he came!” remarked Mrs. Pettisworthy, who now and then presumed upon her fifty years’ faithful services to the family to give her opinion—uncalled for.

“He may restore the name amongst us,” added the baronet’s lady—doubtfully, however.

“Yes! likely enough, considering how he got it!” retorted Sir Hugh, rising impatiently from his chair, and striding across the room to the deep recess of one of the stone-mullioned windows.

There he stood, gazing moodily abroad. The approach of his little grandson caused no anticipation of pleasure to him. The very name of the child was an especial sorrow.

From the Conquest to the Rebellion “*Walter*” and “*Hugh*” were the names borne almost alternately by the successive heads of the House of de Brackenburgh. But at the Rebellion the heir of this most loyal family proved a renegade to all they held sacred. A Roundhead and a Puritan was he; and to such purpose did he use his influence, and spread his opinions amongst his father’s tenantry, that when the Sir Hugh of that day summoned them in the king’s name to take up arms for the cause of Charles, this son *Walter* interposed, and drew away more than half to the army of Cromwell. Nor was this all: when, after the battle of Worcester, the royal cause had fallen, and Royalists and churchmen were alike proscribed, *Walter de Brackenburgh* forgot his duty as a son in his supposed duty as a patriot, and persecuted his aged and defeated father with unrelenting vigilance. Poor Sir Hugh

concealed himself for some time among his tenants, such as he could trust; but, driven from one refuge to another by the determined pursuit of his son, he at last actually found shelter in the castle itself, in its secret chambers and passages.

There he effectually eluded discovery until an opportunity occurred for escape into France. He died in that country. Sir Walter also died without heirs; and the castle and lands descended to a brother, who had taken no part in Walter's rebellion, but who had, on the contrary, proved himself a true Royalist, and a dutiful son.

Many a touching tale had since been told, among the country people, about Sir Hugh, during his concealment in the castle. How he would wander in the rooms by night, his *own* rooms, seeking food in the remnants of his son's feasts—how many narrow escapes he ran of being discovered—how once he was seen, and chased through the dark passages, by one determined fellow, intent on obtaining the reward set on his head; the end of which pursuit no one knew: but Sir Hugh certainly escaped, and the Roundhead was seen no more. Tradition accordingly said that he still wandered inside the walls; and when the night was very stormy, and the wind howled loud, could often be heard pursuing his chase; but with poetic justice the people would say it was the unnatural Sir Walter's spirit, not Sir Hugh's, that this disloyal varlet was perpetually hunting. The memory of Sir Walter was regarded by the country people with abhorrence, and with scarcely less dislike by the descendants of his brother. No child of the de Brackenburghs had since borne his name, until the unhappy little offender came—the Walter Joseph of our story.

And why was he afflicted with this unenviable distinction, which, however, hitherto had troubled Master Joe but little? I will tell you. His father, James de Brackenburgh, the present Sir Hugh's second son, when he grew towards manhood, found himself heir, by his elder brother's death, to an ancient name and a fine old castle; but to encumbered lands and a dilapidated fortune. With the not uncommon violence of youth, he at once set himself to cure these evils by means the most opposed to all Sir Hugh's traditionary prejudices. He refused, perhaps not unwisely, to enter the army, the time-honoured profession of the elder son. He insisted on joining a mercantile firm in Calcutta. He even propounded the monstrous idea that it would be wise to sell the castle, and settle on some smaller property: then finding Sir Hugh

shocked and exasperated, he roughly broke away from all the established usages of his family; he married a lady, worthy enough in herself, but of no descent—a Smith, or Jones, or Robinson of the city; no more fit, in Sir Hugh's opinion, to be the future Lady de Brackenburgh than his old housekeeper, Hannah Pettisworthy, herself; then he betook himself, wife in hand, back to his Indian home; and he finally sealed all his iniquities by naming his son Walter Joseph—Joseph, a name unknown in his pedigree, Walter, an abiding disgrace to it, by the united voice of the whole fraternity, retainers, ancestors, and friends, since the time of the Roundheads.

But lately this elder boy, this Walter Joseph, had been ailing sadly. The climate was evidently killing him: to save his life, he must be sent to England. But to whom? It was a difficult question to answer. To send him to a good school was expensive, and James was poor. His mother's family had met with great reverses; they could not conveniently receive him. There were, indeed, two ancient aunts who might be willing to do so;—but their home was poor and gloomy; neither were they proper people to be intrusted with the education of Sir Hugh's grandson, who, whatever might be his father's fancies, must one day be his grandfather's heir.

No course, therefore, remained open to James but to entreat the outraged old baronet, and to him at last he wrote, more humbly than he once thought he ever could address him, begging him to admit the boy (*his* grandson), now ill, to the old home; and let him regain there the health and strength which his father's quest after money was taking from him.

This letter had arrived nearly a fortnight, and Sir Hugh was still considering his reply, when it was followed by a second, which said that the need was so immediate, and the doctor's orders so imperative, that the little lad was already shipped for England, where he would arrive very soon after the letter. If Sir Hugh would not receive him, he must be sent to some school, or to his mother's two aunts, whose direction was enclosed—a direction, by-the-way, which was in no degree calculated to increase what respect Sir Hugh might feel for Mrs. de Brackenburgh's family.

"Send him there!" thundered Sir Hugh, when he had read this letter. "No, indeed! of course he must come to us. School we may think of—but it must be a fitting one, and I'll have the choosing of it.

He shall be brought up a gentleman, if one can do it; but it is hard fighting against nature, and bad examples, and that hateful name!" cried the prejudiced and indignant old baronet.

Lady de Brackenburgh assented earnestly to the first part of his sentence. Her heart had long yearned towards James, though she was too true to her husband to overlook her son's offences. But she had longed for a reconciliation, and she hailed the arrival of this little boy as a possible opening for it.

"The boy is really coming, Hannah," said Lady de Brackenburgh, as her husband moved from the fireplace, "and soon too."

"Then it behoves us to receive him properly, my lady," responded Hannah; "where is he to sleep? There's the white chamber, only there's a spring there into those passages in the wall. The oriel chamber——"

"Surely there is a spring in the wall in that room also?" remarked her mistress.

"Ay, ay—but it's all safe—hidden away—no boy could find that out, if he ferret ever so much."

"But there is another vacant room on that landing."

"Only Sir Walter's old room!" exclaimed Hannah, with a face of horror. "Sure! you'd never go for to put him in there!" she cried, forgetting all propriety of language in her eagerness.

"He shall *never* sleep there," said the voice of Sir Hugh behind them: "it is bad enough to bear his name; he shall never sleep in his haunts," he added, as he approached the speakers.

"Surely not," concluded Hannah; "besides," she continued, in a lower tone, "that room is *visited*—we wouldn't put the young master in there—no; the oriel room it must be! and all the saints in the calendar, as the saying is, keep the young master from finding out the spring!"

"He is safe enough!" returned Sir Hugh, scornfully; "do you think he'd have pluck enough to get into the passage if he did find it? He show pluck, indeed! Remember his birth, and his home, and his name! You'd look in vain for pluck or spirit in him, I expect."

"Nonsense, Sir Hugh," cried Hannah, rearing herself upright. "If I may be so bold as to say so, you'll frighten all spirit out of the boy if you talk like that. You must give him a chance. Maybe he is come to bring the old name back! it *was* a good name once."

Both the baronet and his lady were a little startled by this sudden attack ; and Lady de Brackenburgh hastened, before Sir Hugh should recover himself, to change the conversation, by inquiring where and how the boy was to be met—a matter easily arranged.

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At length the day arrived, and the carriage, with the best harness and the newest liveries, drove to the county town of Brantham, about twenty miles off, to meet the heir of the de Brackenburghs of Brackenburgh Castle, one of the first county families in that part of the country.

Now Walter Joseph returned to the land of his forefathers with the smallest possible idea of his own importance. A puny, sickly boy amongst eight brothers and sisters ; his father a junior partner of a failing house, surrounded by the magnates of prosperous firms ; his mother, a gentle, hardworking lady, who knew little, and thought less of the glories of the de Brackenburghs,—how was the boy, Joe, as he was called at home, to know anything of the position that he might hold in England ? It contrasted too painfully with their position abroad for James de Brackenburgh to speak of it. Even the De in the name had been dropped, and little Joe Brackenburgh was a nobody, and thought himself a nobody.

He was not in the least prepared, therefore, for the observation and deference that awaited him at the Brantham station, nor for the handsome equipage standing there for him.

“Am I to get into *That* ?” was his undignified exclamation, as he was respectfully invited to do so by a tall footman, in mulberry-coloured livery, trimmed with gold lace.

“Yes!—if you please, sir. You are Master de Brackenburgh, I believe, sir ?” said the man, rather doubtfully, for Joe’s surprise had puzzled him.

Of all the sins of the family, ignorance of their own position had never been one, and the man was half afraid he had missed his young master.

“Oh, yes ! I suppose so. I’m Joe Brackenburgh,” replied the boy ; “but my box, I must get that first.”

“Can I get it for you, sir ? which way is it ?”

“Near the engine,” said Joe ; “but I can get it : it will be troubling you, won’t it ?”

“No,” said the man, rather contemptuously ; “I will bring it to you.”

Joe felt abashed without knowing why. However, he meekly followed his big conductor, waited until his tidy little box was found, and then accompanied him to the carriage.

Sir Hugh's carriage was one to attract attention; and its present appearance in Brantham was known to be caused by the arrival of the future baronet; therefore a considerable crowd was gathered round it, awaiting the approach of small Joe, who, heralded by the big footman, now descended from the platform. All fell back respectfully to let him pass; but it cannot be said that his personal appearance made much impression upon the multitude.

"Am I to get in there, to ride all alone?" repeated the poor little lad, beginning to think it a very awful thing to be Sir Hugh's grandson. But the next moment he devoutly hoped his words had been unheard by his enemy, as he began to regard the tall footman, for the steps were banged down, and the door flung open with such an impressive air, that, seized by an uncontrollable fit of shyness, Joe scrambled in, wishing for nothing so much as to be hidden inside.

But his troubles were not at an end. The station-master was, as it happened, an old tenant of the family, and of course he had his welcome to offer to the heir. Joe stood in the doorway, holding on by each side, gazed at by the crowd, and deafened by a peal of bells that were clanging in a neighbouring steeple to his honour, but by no means to his comfort. He did his best to listen—answering when he could to the numerous inquiries and remarks made to him—but dreadfully scared, and wondering when it would end. He was a dauntless boy by nature, but these men—they were so tall, so talkative, and so horribly respectful, that he did not know how to bear with them. However, at length the door shut, Joe sank out of sight, and the carriage drove off.

Twenty miles is a long drive for any person old enough to enjoy the scenery, or revel in thought, or lose himself in reading (or sleeping); but to a child it is an interminable infliction. Soon Walter Joseph began to wonder what the de Brackenburghs lived so far off for; then, as the evening came on, what they stayed in so cold a country for; and at last he looked about for something to wrap himself in, for he was very cold. Of greatcoat or rug he had none, and, strange to say, old Hannah had forgotten to provide any for him. He curled himself up in one corner of the spacious carriage; but he had

been carefully brought up, and it went against his conscience to put his feet on the cushions! So he was not at ease at all. And finally, after settling and resettling himself several times, he rolled himself up in an old forgotten horsecloth that he dragged from under the large seat, and lay down on the floor of the coach. There, quite happy, and quite sure that he could hurt nothing, and was breaking no rules, Walter Joseph fell asleep, and was rocked by the swaying of the carriage into the soundest nap possible.

Thus did the heir of the de Brackenburghs make his appearance at Brackenburgh Castle. At least "appearance" is scarcely the word, since little but the crown of his forehead was visible outside his horsecloth. Thus did he arrive, then, at the grand entrance of the castle. The coachman had whipped his horses into a becoming trot up the avenue, the footman had drawn himself up more stiffly than usual (only the night was so dark that no one could see him!), Sir Hugh had crossed the hall with stately eagerness, which he would fain have concealed, "my lady" had hurried anxiously after him, Hannah in her best attire had pressed forward as the great doors were flung open, and the full blaze of lamps turned upon the threshold;—but who could see the heir? The footman descended, threw open the carriage door, and let down the steps—but Master de Brackenburgh—where was he? who could recognise a de Brackenburgh, or a mortal of any sort above a lapdog, in that confused heap upon the floor; where could he be?

But Joe awoke and started up, rubbing his eyes, and staring wonderingly around. Then, in glorious unconsciousness of being out of place, up he scrambled, shook off his wraps, and exclaimed: "Oh! where am I? I do think I've been asleep!"

The expression on Sir Hugh's face at this moment ought to have annihilated Joe. For an instant he gazed at the untidy child (thus shaking himself out of his rug), then he turned on his heel, and retraced his steps towards the dining-room, murmuring to himself indignantly and sorrowfully as he paced on: "Walter Joseph—Walter Joseph—Walter Joseph!—well, I expected nothing better, but it is hard—it is abominable!" and he retreated to his fire and newspaper, and left his hapless grandson to his fate.

His wife watched his retreating figure with an aching heart. The slamming of his door seemed to shut out the last chance of James' return!

But Hannah, though equally disconcerted, came more swiftly to the rescue. She advanced to lift the sinning little lad out of the carriage.

However, Joe required no help. He had reached the hall door in safety, and was gazing with surprise and delight at the scene within. The hall of the castle was large, lofty, and very dark. No amount of light ever burnt in it sufficed to illumine all its dark recesses. Men in armour decorated the corners, suits of armour, banners, heraldic shields, and weapons hung on all sides, intermingled with some drapery of more modern date. A large open fireplace contained a blazing wood fire, which vied with a considerable number of pendant lamps distributed around in the endeavour to light up the gloomy corners; vied, however, in vain, though the centre was a blaze of illumination. Joe longed to search out all the wonders around him, which he could catch dim outlines of, flickering in the fire-rays. But soon an object caught his eye which attracted him strangely—his beautiful grandmother. She was standing a little apart, her slight figure in relief against some massive crimson drapery behind her, and her rich dress lit up by the glowing light of the fire. She looked fit to be the mistress of her noble hall. But it was the expression of her countenance that so powerfully attracted the child. Yearning, patient, sad, and so gentle it was, that Joe stepped towards her with a frank look of sympathy and trust, which won her heart at once. Poor thing! she had led a lonely, wistful life in her lordly castle, ever since her only remaining child had parted from them in disdain and wrath. Joe's trustful, happy smile went to her very heart, and clasping him to her, she bestowed on him one of the long loving kisses that no one else had claimed for years.

Hannah was somewhat appeased at the sight of this meeting. "Maybe he's not so bad after all!" she considered. "I dare say now they took no rug for the poor child, and it's an uncommon cold night. If he'd none of his own, what was he to do, but get into the horse-rug? But they ought to have seen to it, and not have let him come popping up like a chick out of its straw. Bless my heart! why it frightened Sir Hugh,—let alone me. However, I'll go and see to his fire upstairs, and then, Hannah Pettisworthy!" she added, addressing herself, "I reckon 'twill be you who will have to teach the young gentleman manners!"

(To be continued.)